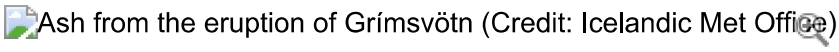
Volcano overview

23 May



The British Geological Survey (BGS) have described the eruption of Grímsvötn that began over the weekend as a 'significant eruption' and the Icelandic Met Office (IMO) have reported ash continuing to be ejected to a height of 10km.

As the Volcanic Ash Advisory Centre for the northwest Europe region, the Met Office is receiving information about the eruption from colleagues in the IMO and BGS. We use this to provide guidance on the movement of the ash plume.

The movement of the ash plume will depend on how long the volcano continues to erupt and how weather patterns develop. The Met Office London Volcanic Ash Advisory Centre (VAAC) continues to provide forecast guidance up to 24 hours ahead to support decision-making. This guidance is provided to the Civil Aviation Authority as the lead agency, NATS, airports and airline operators in order to support their decisions on whether aircraft can fly safely.

Currently the Met Office forecasts that ash is likely to reach parts of northern and western Scotland overnight tonight and into tomorrow morning. How this affects flight routing decisions would be determined by CAA and NATS, together with the individual airlines.

Further ahead, the outlook is very changeable with areas of low pressure likely to track across parts of northern Britain during the remainder of the week. The means that wind direction is likely to be quite variable and you should stay up to date with the latest weather forecast from the Met Office.

The Met Office London VAAC uses a range of technologies to predict the movement of volcanic ash including computer models, satellite imagery and observations from Radar, Lidar and aircraft.

The Met Office dispersion model forecasts are routinely validated and verified against all available observations, such as from satellite, Radar, Lidar and aircraft. For example, a weather balloon that can sample ash concentrations will be launched in western Scotland in the next 24 hours and we are working with airlines and others to undertake airborne measurements.

Last updated: 26 May 2011